

*The Belmont Band. Left: Otto Bohn, Paul Sage, Fred Cook, Messler and Paul Bohn on the right. The Bohn brothers moved with their father, William, from Minnesota to a farm on Bunco Rd. near Athol in 1906. William, a German immigrant, filed for immigration papers in 1873. Org-1-4*

## Ethnicity of the Panhandle

To complement the upcoming exhibit on immigration we are featuring an edited excerpt from Francis Schouler Heard's unpublished manuscript "A Groundbreaking Season: Building Communities in Idaho's Five Northern Counties 1890-1915"

### Introduction

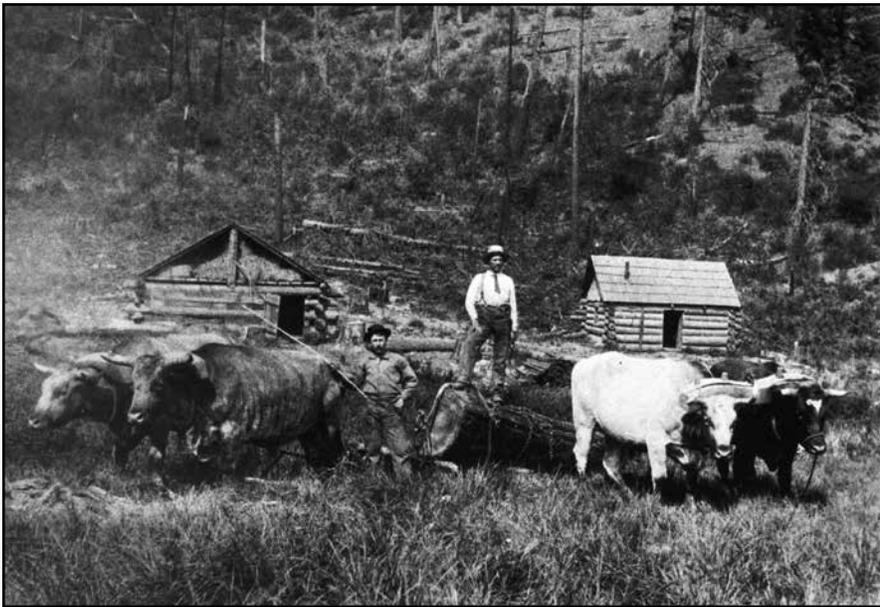
The ethnic diversity of North Idaho takes for granted a solid social backdrop of those "already Americans," several previous generations of mostly European immigrants already assimilated into the American context and therefore not mentioned as being from anywhere in particular, except spots on the changing map of the United States. It should be kept in mind the "already Americans" formed not only the backdrop for the newcomers but also provided the stage setting upon which the newer immigrants stood out and were highlighted, not always in a flattering or accurate manner.

North Idahoans showed little hesitation in electing

to local, county or state offices persons with German names like Wenz, Swedish names like Melder, Norwegian names like Findstat and Italians names like Rossi. Bonners Ferry elected black Frank Cook mayor and city council member. Idahoans elected Jewish Moses Alexander governor.

Intermarriage was common with Danes marrying Finns; Germans marrying Swedes; Italians marrying Germans; Scots marrying Indians. The Catholic Church, among other religious and secular institutions, discouraged whites from marrying Indians, but they did anyway. And there were many other less celebrated and less well-documented inter-ethnic unions.

Most North Idaho immigrants were "two-stagers" settling in the east where they first landed or the mid-west where their previously immigrated families had employment. They became naturalized citizens in those locations and migrated west as their desire for better economic conditions and land availability drew them. This article looks at some of those groups.



*Harry Miller & James Nevine on a homestead below St. Maries c. 1895. He-1-121*

Charles attended the University of Idaho and was an early Mullan High School principal.

Rochat, who did not sell real estate, was reproached, sometimes abusively, for his puffed-up descriptions, which some called misrepresentations, of the St. Joe Valley. His Swiss Colony was a hard-working, religious, frugal farm and dairy community.

Leila Olin recalled the farm families, in the 1893 depression, sold rather than ate their eggs. They packed tubs of butter to Wallace and, when it turned rancid, they brought it back home to use. When kerosene was spilled in transit on the winter's supply of flour, they ate kerosene-flavored bread all winter.

### Swiss, Germans and Austrians

Immigration to the United States from Switzerland, Germany and Austria was a matter of both pull and push. The pull came from the availability of land and jobs and glowing reports of those who had already emigrated. The push was provided by inheritance customs, conscription and, after 1852, the Swiss government's monitoring and publishing of economic conditions in the United States. The Swiss custom of a father dividing "his land holdings among his sons" resulted in "minute subdivisions of land" where farming was impractical. Conscription, mostly of the lower classes, was a Prussian practice forced on Germany after the 1871 Franco-Prussian War which was followed by political upheaval. Also pushing immigration was a European-wide decline in agricultural prices. Steamship companies and American Railroads capitalized on these conditions.

Swiss-born Henri Rochat settled in the St. Joe Valley after he "made a modest fortune" importing Swiss watches in New York. He had spent some time in Walla Walla in Washington Territory. A 1910 map shows Rochat Creek flowing into the St. Joe River. Rochat's glowing letters to "the old country" encouraged such individuals and families as Montandon, DuCommon, Stauffer, Porrett, Jacot, Fritz Streit, Emile Matthey and Edward LeCoultre to come to Idaho.

Montandon (father of Charles A. Montandon) met Rochat in 1885 in Rathdrum where he bought the claim of Jacques Gerrold. Montandon's family sailed third class from Switzerland and then took the train to Rathdrum changing cars in Chicago and St. Paul. A French Canadian drove them to Coeur d'Alene where Captain Sorenson conveyed them on the Lottie up the St. Joe to their home across the river from St. Maries.

The April 17 1906, St. Maries Gazette reported the passage of a train of Fernwood-bound settlers which included 19 horses and about 30 men, women and children. Ties with the mother country were not broken. Mrs. A.E. Fleming left in 1906, via the East Coast, for Basle, Switzerland where she had inherited \$30,000 upon the death of her father, John Nater, the previous March. She was planning to return to Benewah County. The Gazette, on June 24, 1907, told of Mrs. S. Montandon and daughter, Hattie and Mrs. Alfred Jacot and three children including Marie leaving for Switzerland where the two girls would spend the year in school.

Olga Bel, native of Payerne, Switzerland, and mother of Stella Bottrell, studied to become a teacher but discovered children made her nervous. Becoming a professional seamstress she visited her St. Maries' cousins, the Porretts (Porrett Lake). She remained there after marrying James Patterson, a Scotch-Irishman. Their children spoke English with their father and French with their mother.

Panhandle newspapers chronicled a positive response to German immigration. The St. Maries Gazette on June 30, 1903 mentioned the recent sale of a large number of farms in the vicinity of Lane to German farmers from Wisconsin. The October 28, 1910, Rathdrum Tribune wrote about a large colony of Germans who bought several hundred acres just east of Athol: "This is the class of people that will make every acre produce."

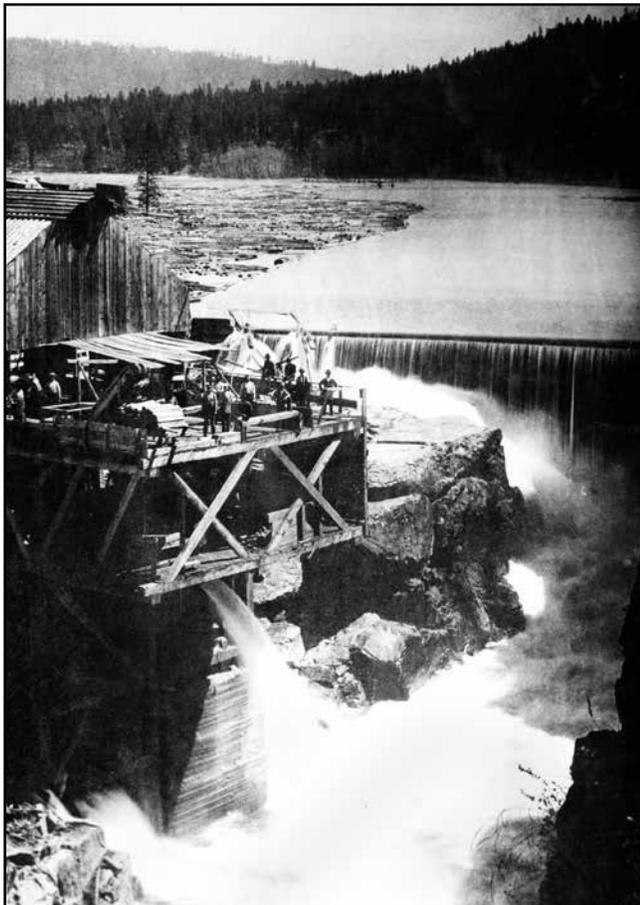
Three of the Panhandle's prominent German immigrants were Dr. Frank Wenz, Frederick Post and Albert Klockmann (Klockman).

Wenz was born in 1863 in Otterburg, Germany and

graduated from the Detroit College of Medicine in 1889. Diploma in hand, he was bound for Spokane when the train stopped in Rathdrum. He liked what he saw and stayed. He bought a medical practice and a drugstore where he compounded prescriptions. During his career in Rathdrum (1890-1932), he served as the Presbyterian Church clerk, school board trustee and clerk, city council person and physician of the Modern Woodmen of America. His appointment as Kootenai County Health Officer included the present Benewah, Bonner and Boundary counties.

Despite his medical reputation and years of community service, Wenz, during WWI, was reprimanded in a resolution by the City Council and asked to resign for making statements sympathetic to Germany. Anna Roth Beito (Twin Lakes-Spirit Lake) recalled Rathdrum folks making him crawl down Main Street to prove he was a loyal American. His German sympathies were apparently forgiven because, when he died in 1932, all local businesses closed during the hour of his funeral.

Frederick Post, for whom the town of Post Falls was named, was born September 16, 1821, in Germany and naturalized in Kendall City, Illinois about 1850. In 1871, he moved to Idaho Territory and purchased 280



*German immigrant Frederick Post's water-powered mill at Post Falls. Built in 1880 it burned in 1902. Mil-11-6*

acres at Treaty Rock from the Indians. He later had to re-purchase this land from the United States Government. He built a gristmill and the area's first sawmill and dammed the Spokane River. (He later offered the sawmill to the Army for \$1000). He bought Conner's squatter's rights at present day Rathdrum. In 1889, he purchased railroad-owned city lots stretching (west to east) from McGuire Road to Ross Point. He later moved to Spokane Falls.

Albert Klockmann came to the United States with two college chums "on a pleasure trip" but he came west alone. In Rathdrum, Henry Reiniger, a former German resident and a local brewer, invited him to his home. "The Klockmann Diary" records Reiniger offering him some capital to stay in North Idaho and not continue as planned to Spokane, Seattle and San Francisco. Klockmann took the advice and located a claim on the Continental Mine. He filed the claim in both the United States and Canada since the boundary line between them had not yet been surveyed and marked. Klockmann wrote his reminiscences when he was in his 80s and they are worth reading according to Frances Heard who compiled the information for this article.

Charles and Ernest Klockmann joined their brother, Albert, in North Idaho and established (with plans to expand) a 180-acre stock ranch in the Kootenai Valley near Porthill. The ranch included a good barn and a pumping plant for waterworks and had plans for electric lights. Stockholders, according to the *Bonnors Ferry Herald*, were largely "thrifty Germans just from the old country" who planned to take out naturalization papers immediately in the county seat. The Herald wished the newly arrived Klockmanns success like their "active and energetic brother's".

John George Nagel, born in 1859 in Wertenburg, Germany, came to Clark Fork after immigrating to Spokane Falls. He progressed from hewing ties for the Northern Pacific RR to building his own sawmill. Trained as a teacher in Germany, he served on the Clark Fork school board and donated land for a District 16 school in 1900. He donated for the Clark Fork Methodist Church and served as postmaster and as Kootenai County Commissioner before Bonner County was created. His wife, Annie Schindler, probably also a German native, raised poultry and rabbits and sold milk and cream from eight Holstein cows. A midwife, she also operated a boarding and rooming house for teachers and mill workers.

Charles Selle, born in 1849 in Hanover, Germany, immigrated to Michigan timber country where he married his second wife, Julia Miller, a German immigrant born in Russian-occupied Poland. Moving to North Idaho about 1896, he homesteaded 160 acres and operated a logging camp employing 150-200 men



*Club Saloon in Rathdrum, 1911. Left: Ace Polson (barber), 2 unknowns, Sammy Morgan (retired miner from Wallace), Joe Poirier (blacksmith), J. George Thomas (by the post), Billy Russell (father ran the store), George Howell, Bill Overby (farmer), Rich Thomas. Rat-4-2*

and “many teams of horses”. He bequeathed his name to Selle, a community nine miles outside of Sandpoint.

The *Independent* (Coeur d’Alene) reported Mathias Galser, “a meek little German”, relinquished his “good homestead” worth \$1,400 to Richard Scheller—who hounded him—for only \$800. The Galser incident was reportedly one of the worst intimidation cases brought to the land office’s attention for sometime.

In late June 1910 Spokane and Rathdrum residents of German ancestry picnicked at upper Twin Lakes while the Rathdrum State Bank furnished music. Rathdrum also had a German Methodist Church that later was the Community Methodist.

The Panhandle news media did not report very favorably on Austrians although they were related to Germans by blood and language. The Idaho Press, May 6, 1909, described a man killed by a Northern Pacific train as an intoxicated Austrian. A mix-up at an Austrian camp on Maginnis spur near Sandpoint was reported to have started when some took offence

at one man who threatened to fight and knives and revolvers were pulled but no one was killed. A fatal shooting was reported Miko Virksur, “a fighting man”, shot fellow-Austrian George Sausinich (Sowsinich) at Enaville on a Sunday night. Though witnessed by Manich Sular, the nature of the quarrel was unknown since neither man spoke English. “All the men (were) said to have been sober at the time”—More sober than usual since none had laid in the usual Saturday night liquor supply. At the trial, Tony Busta acted as interpreter. A witness heard Virksur threaten to kill some Bulgarians who started in pursuit. Hot blood plus ethnic rivalry compounded by language begot violence.

The *Independent* (Coeur d’Alene) on November 23, 1904, told of Mr. Sala, a hard-working Austrian immigrant, who came from Wisconsin to the Coeur d’Alene Mining District with his wife and daughter. Having saved \$1,000, he moved to Harrison about 1890 and purchased 40 acres from A. A. Crane. Sala anticipated his daughter’s college matriculation as she spoke three languages fluently and did graduate from Harrison High School in 1897. On a trip to Buffalo Hump, Sala

disappeared “probably murdered”. Widowed, Mrs. Katena Sala continued to work hard even carrying lumber on her back to build a “small but comfortable home.” Crane, notorious for irregular land deals, tried to claim the improved acreage. A Spokane lawyer arguing the case “was beaten at every turn” owing to Crane’s influence but appealed and got a reversal from the general land commissioner.

On a happier note, Joseph Schaume and Lena Poke, whose engagement had been broken in Michigan, were reconciled. Their Austrian engagement ceremony was repeated in the presence of guests at Pickler’s Wallace home. Clasp hands, they promised to marry the first Sunday after Lent. A Wallace Justice of the Peace married former Guttenborg sweethearts, Peter Albert Johnson and Hedwig Rebecka Elizabeth Forsblad after Peter paid her fare to North Idaho.

Ignatz Weil from Vienna, Austria, moved from San Francisco and homesteaded in Sandpoint in 1888 and bought a store. In 1907 he built the Bonner County Courthouse which he rented to the county. He was the first Bonner County clerk and the United States Commissioner of Idaho. For a monthly retainer of \$100, he hired Archie O’Donnell to help with his mining and lumbering interests. When those interests “were falling apart” in 1910, O’Donnell asked to be removed from the payroll.

### French and French Canadians

French Canadians were plentiful but French from France were rare. Arriving on some of the first Northern Pacific trains were Joe, Louis and Albeni Poirier who spoke little English. Joe, arriving in Rathdrum in

1879, started a blacksmithy there in 1884. Louis, 17, and Albeni, 22, began a joint venture in farming and cattle raising south of what is now Blanchard. Albeni sold his share to Louis and built a two-story hotel and eating place at what became Albeni Falls. He added a barn and blacksmithy. A magnet for locals on Saturday night was his saloon with an upstairs dance hall that was also enjoyed by Sunday excursionists from Spokane.

They were “largely responsible for widening the Indian trail from Rathdrum to Albeni Falls,” the area’s first wagon road. Before the railroad came through Blanchard, Louis stockpiled hay in his Newport, Washington barn, until he had a carload. He threshed “timothy seed by letting horses trample it on a wooden floor and then tossed the hay with a pitchfork.” The separated seed was taken by wagon and train on a two-day trip to Dishman, Washington, and sold.

John A. Gowanlock, Quebec, arrived in Spokane before the 1889 fire. With Austin Corbin, he built the Spokane Falls and Northern Railway that later became part of the Great Northern system. He married Mederise, sister of Louis and Albeni Poirier, and operated a Priest River store. He died in the 1930s in Spokane at the age of 90.

Marie Groh Gorman, a resident of Bovill in Benewah County, recounted how her mother, a French aristocrat, had played with a poor boy befriended by her maternal grandfather. After an 18-year separation, they married in New York City and he operated a store in Bovill. With Alsace-Lorraine ancestry, the family spoke French one week, German another and “American English” the third. They alternated French and German at Christmas celebrations.

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## Where Are Your Roots?

This year’s feature exhibit explores people who were born in a foreign country and settled in our area. This includes the two-stage immigrants who may have stopped in the east or mid-west before coming here.

Early settlers in the area included Western and Eastern Europeans, British Islanders, Italians and Scandinavian who, by 1900, made up one quarter of all foreign born in Idaho with possibly a higher percentage in North Idaho. The exhibit will explore their journey, how they built community, what kind of work they found and how they kept their culture alive.

We are seeking information about the experiences of people in North Idaho. If you have information, artifacts to loan or donate or would like to work on the exhibit please contact the Museum [dd@msueumni.org](mailto:dd@msueumni.org).

I thank committee members Karen DeSeve, Skip Kuck and Marian Akerman. Please join are committee.



*Ladies dressed in attire from the “Old Country” in front of Coeur d’Alene’s first doctor’s office one block from Sanders Beach on 11th St. The doctors were John Sabin and Hober Elderkin. CDA-18-12*

**The Museum re-opens April 2  
Tuesday thru Saturday 11-5**

## From the Board President

I fail miserably at keeping New Year's resolutions so I begin the year thinking about how to make self-improvement fun. Finding new opportunities for learning and inspiration always rises to the top of the list. In particular, I enjoy learning about the events and people who shaped the history of North Idaho.

Fortunately, the Museum of North Idaho provides a wealth of resources for those curious about our community's past. In 2019 many exciting new learning opportunities will be coming our way.

On April 2, the Museum will open a feature exhibit about immigrants. I can hardly wait to tour the exhibit and learn more about the history of various cultures in our region. I also plan to be one of the first in line to pick up a copy of Robert Singletary's new book *Coeur d'Alene Beautiful and Progressive: An Illustrated History of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, 1878-1990*. As our foremost expert on local history, Robert has authored a must-have book for anyone interested in learning more about our city. And, if that's not enough, renowned Spokane author Jack Nisbet will speak at our Annual Members' Celebration on April 16. Sign up early to make sure you have a seat.

Our Museum staff and volunteers are planning more historical lectures, collecting stories for our newsletter and planning events. Stay tuned for announcements throughout the year.

With the 2019 theme of "Growing Toward the Future" our efforts this year are to increase community awareness and support for our programs. We are committed to offering outstanding programs today

while working to raise funds and realize our future vision of a premier regional museum facility.

On behalf of the Board I wish to thank our members, donors and community partners for your vital support of the Museum as we grow to the future. We invite you come join us for some exciting learning opportunities in 2019!

**Julie Gibbs, President of the Board**

## Year-end Fundraising

We greatly appreciate the response to our year-end appeal letter. Thank you all for supporting the Museum.

## Cash Donations

Sheryl Brandon  
Jeff & Dawn Fehrs  
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David Schilke

Special thanks to Terri Hunter and Randy Bates for 990 tax preparations.

## Building Fund Donations

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## Serve on the Board

Please consider serving on the Board to ensure the Museum continues to serve our community and preserve our history. We need your help to grow into the future.

Helpful skills:

- Donor & community connections
- Law
- Real estate knowledge
- Financial management
- Nonprofit experience
- Consensus builder

Email [dd@museumni.org](mailto:dd@museumni.org) or mail to the Museum a resume or letter discussing your strengths. Nominees will be confirmed by the membership in mid-April.

Contact Nominating Committee Chair Mike Dixon at 208-659-2807 or Dorothy Dahlgren at 208-664-3448 [dd@museumni.org](mailto:dd@museumni.org). Go to [www.museumni.org](http://www.museumni.org) for more info.

## Artifact Donations Since November

Gale B. Walley: Books for the library.

Susan Overby: Books for the library.

Tom & Carol Pettibone: Vinyl record "The Dan Leons Then & Now"

Joria Irish: Late 1800s buggy coat and muff.

AnaLee Compton: Drawing of Playland Pier, 1972 by Opal Brooten.

Dolores Palush (Susan Andrews): Illustravox machine for showing slides with a record player, circa 1950.

Ed Joy: Cap from Arrow Boys' Camp

Tom Ortega: Indian artifacts and photos.

## Memorials

Remember friends and loved ones with a memorial donation to the Museum's Endowment Fund.

- For **Kay Grant Powers** from Dorothy Dahlgren and Geoff Howard
- For **Larry Adams** from Alice Adams
- For **Robert Hulick** from Maxine Hulick
- For **James LePard** from Maurice Johnson
- For **Herb Sanderson** from Sandy Sanderson
- For **John Huber, Jr.** from Karen Huber
- For **Dianne Higgins** from Michelle Franz
- For **Chuck Adams, Jr.** from Mary Adams
- For **Patti Wilhelm** from George & Wilma Wilhelm

You can send the donation to us or deposit it directly to the Idaho Community Foundation at [www.idcomfdn.org](http://www.idcomfdn.org), then type in Museum of North Idaho.

This is a nice way to honor and remember your friends and loved ones. Please include the address of the family member you would like us to notify.

## Inland Northwest Milestones

### Robert Singletary's Free Lectures On Coeur d'Alene Coeur d'Alene Public Library 7 pm.

Feb. 28 *Farragut's Influence on Coeur d'Alene*

March 28: *Coeur d'Alene After WWII and into the 1950s*

April 25 *Coeur d'Alene in the 1960s and 1970s*

May 23 *The Turbulent, but Progressive 1980s*

**Annual Celebration (Annual Meeting and Dinner) April 16, Tuesday, Best Western Coeur d'Alene Inn. Jack Nesbit, speaker**

## Growing Toward the Future To Preserve the Past

Gifts to the Museum endowment provide income for today and for tomorrow. Our endowment fund, held by the Idaho Community Foundation earned \$9,000 last year which went to support Museum programs and services.

Your donation to the endowment is never spent. Only the income generated is used. The endowment will provide the means to continue the preservation of our local history long after we are gone.

The endowment grows because of your donation. Consult your accountant to learn about the great tax benefits for donating to a 501 c 3 and museums.

## Annual Meeting

The Museum's annual meeting/dinner has been a time for members to gather, visit, honor a "Friend of History" and hear a historical program. We will continue to have this program but we are changing the name to "Annual Celebration" and inviting those outside of our Museum family to attend to help us grow toward the future. We've moved to the Coeur d'Alene Inn to allow us to double our attendance to 200. We encourage you to invite friends to attend the dinner. We are

offering tables of eight which will include preferred seating, wine, and, if you have a business, prominent acknowledgement placement. The pricing and menu, along with the ballot for the election of board members, will be mailed in late March.

Our speaker is author Jack Nisbet, whose books explore the intersection of human and natural history.

Nisbet's most recent title, *The Dreamer and the Doctor*, traces the unlikely saga of John and Carrie Leiberg. John was a railroad worker who homesteaded on the south end of Lake Pend Oreille in 1885 and prospected for mineral wealth all over the Little North Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River. Carrie was a licensed physician who practiced her trade in Post Falls, Spokane, and Hope. John was also an accomplished naturalist, and his 1895 survey of the Coeur d'Alene Basin led to landmark Forest Reserve surveys all over the Western United States. Carrie published articles on her cases in prominent medical journals and ran for state representative in 1900. The Leiberg story reflects aspects of the pioneer-era Idaho Panhandle both familiar and surprising, and their struggles resonate forward to thorny issues of our present time.

**April 16 social hour/book signing  
6 pm, dinner 7pm.**

**Coeur d'Alene Inn, 506 W. Appleway**



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## Send in Your Membership

- Friend of History* \$500
- Georgie Oakes* \$100+
- Idaho* \$100
- Flyer* \$50
- Amelia Wheaton* \$25

## Make An Additional Donation To A Special Fund

- Memorial/Endowment \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Building Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_
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## Museum of North Idaho

*Our mission is to collect, preserve and interpret the history of the Coeur d'Alene Region to foster appreciation of the area's heritage.*

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